

Greetings Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon, Senator Somers, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Lauren Crowley and I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker working at Community Health Center at a School Based Health Center at Pulaski Middle School in New Britain. I am writing to support H.B. No. 7027, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2019.

I am writing because I care about the children of Connecticut. Every child deserves health, happiness, and to work towards his or her goals. It is difficult for children to learn when they are not feeling well physically or emotionally. School Based Health Centers play a vital part in the lives of children to help them be able to focus, feel healthy, and be able to learn.

I have been working in a School Based Health Center in New Britain for 9 years. At my previous site, our nurse practitioner treated our students on a wide range of health issues. She tested for strep throat, tested for pregnancy and STIs, helped with headaches and stomachaches, and other issues. Our nurse practitioner also screened the students, particularly for depression, and then connected students and families to resources to help, including referring them to myself. I felt this was a huge help to student and families. The students know us and we have a rapport with them. They often shared things with us that they told us they didn't tell their regular medical provider. Also, parents did not need to miss work to take their child to an appointment. Many parents who miss work will not get paid. This can certainly cause difficulties for a family who is working hard to meet their financial needs. Often times a family may have to wait a good deal of time for their child to be seen at their medical provider's office. If students are treated during school, they can stay in school and not need to go home. This helps the students to miss less school and spend more time on task and learning.

I have worked with many students for counseling who used to go to an agency outside of school but had difficulty continuing services because of transportation or a parent's work hours. By having students seen through their School Based Health Center, they can be seen on a regular basis. Also, at times students who go to counseling at an agency outside of school may miss an entire day of school to attend the appointment. If students are seen at school, they miss about one period or class and then are able to attend school the rest of the day.

I feel fortunate to work where the students are. I have regular appointments with them, but they know that I am available if issues come up during the day. I feel that it's comforting to know that I am available to them as needed at school. Often if a student is having a difficult day, we will problem solve some solutions to the challenge taking place. I also teach students to advocate for themselves. I remind them of the resources available at school and help them communicate with them so that they feel empowered. In addition, School Based Health Center

staff can connect with students whom staff members are worried about and feel could benefit from support.

I have worked with students with a variety of issues and difficult life situations. I feel that a success from this year is about a student who has been school avoidant. She is now coming to school, has made friends, and her anxiety about school has decreased. She refers to myself and a school staff member as “perks” at school. She says that she doesn’t have these “perks” at home for support so she comes to school for them. I think it’s very comforting to her to know that if she feels stressed or overwhelmed, she has support. We are also working with her dad to support him in helping her to feel less anxious about school.

Other students stand out to me as well. I run many groups each day. I love to see the relief on group members’ faces when they realize they are not alone. Often a student may feel that he or she is the only person going through a certain difficult time. By being in a group through the School Based Health Center, the student will receive support and validation of not being the only student dealing with this difficult situation. I am so proud of all the students I work with, but especially of the students I work with who share the difficulties in their lives and also support their fellow group members.

Please maintain funding to School Based Health Centers in our state so that young people can continue to learn, connect with peers and adults, and stay in school. School Based Health Centers meet many of their needs on a daily basis.

Thank you for supporting School Based Health Centers.